# Order of Worship Advent 1C

# Making Space for the Grace of Hope

## God Gathers Us

### Welcome/Call to Worship Gesture

One: (once, facing congregation, using signs for “God” and “Welcome”): God, we welcome you here.

Many: signing or speaking and physically turning bodies or heads: once to front, once right, and once left): **Welcome, God!** [Alternate, if you are not using ASL: **Welcome Source of Hope!**]

[Learn ASL for “God”](https://www.handspeak.com/word/922/)

[Learn ASL for “Welcome”](https://www.handspeak.com/word/2380/)

**We have intentionally prioritized physical gestures as a congregational welcome to disrupt the usual “words of welcome” and to elevate alternative means of worship for members who have neurological injuries, who are non-verbal, or who may find listening to a large volume of words, or being asked to speak words aloud responsively a barrier to their full participation.**

### Land Acknowledgement

### Life and Work of the Church

### Advent Wreath-Lighting

A: As we light the candle of hope today

B: We make space for the grace of hope *(Pause as the hope candle is lit).*

A: We open our imperfect hearts to God’s Word

B: That hope will be rekindled in our lives, and

All: that we may share God’s hope with our world.

### Advent Candle-Lighting Hymn

“As We Light This Candle” © Lisa Waites, 2024[[1]](#footnote-1)

(This Sunday, only the first verse, chorus, and first verse again are sung. To help the congregation become familiar with this music, you could invite your accompanist to play the music as part of the musical prelude before the service begins to introduce the tune and the rhythms of the hymn. Additionally, the worship leader and/or choir could sing the first verse and chorus, and then have the congregation join in repeating the first verse, chorus, and first verse again. This is the shortest version of the candle-lighting hymn, so there is time to help your people learn the melody. The hymn is designed to add one theme verse each week throughout the Advent season (hope, peace, joy, love), culminating with the fifth verse (Christ) on Christmas Eve.)

### Passing the Peace

The Peace of Christ be with you all!

**And also with you.**

Let us share the peace of Christ with those nearest to you, using a word, sign, or gesture of peace as we prepare to sing our opening hymn together.

[Learn ASL for “Peace”](http://www.handspeak.com/word/1609)

(The musical accompanist could quietly play a verse or two of the opening hymn while the people are Passing the Peace, thereby helping the congregation to become familiar with the melody/rhythms before singing aloud.)

### Gathering Hymn

VU 2 “Come Thou Long Expected Jesus”

### Prayer of Approach

(Unison, drawing from Jeremiah 33:14–16, Psalm 25:5,9, and Luke 21:28,36)

Long-Expected Jesus, the day of our redemption is drawing near! Your holy Advent weaves past, present, and future together in a timeless tapestry of hope, of gracious promises made and fulfilled. We remember your faithfulness to your people, O God, and we are encouraged. As we worship, keep us alert to your kin-dom and watchful in prayer. We anticipate the future, longing to roll or walk, sit or stand\* more completely in your presence as we await your glorious return. Holy Spirit, lead us in your steadfast love; we humbly place our trust in you. Amen.

Luke 21:28,36 includes “stand up and raise your heads” and “to stand before the Son of Man.” One way to avoid these implicitly ableist connotations is to either substitute other words that preserve the original meaning (e.g., “be alert and pay attention” for verse 28, or “to bear up” or “to be acceptable” for verse 36). Another option is to expand the biblical reading to include other physical modes of being (e.g., “roll or walk, sit or stand”). Please also be sure that you aren’t unconsciously prioritizing able-bodied descriptors by putting them first, thereby suggesting that able-bodied descriptors are the “norm,” while adaptive modes of ambulation are second thought. Our linguistic choices matter. As worship leaders, we have the power to reinforce ableist tropes or to graciously confront and replace them with anti-ableist (accessible, universally designed) liturgies.

### Musical Call to Confession

VU34 “Come Now, O God of Hope”

This hymn can be adapted each week of Advent to suit the theme of the service. For Advent 1C, the lyric becomes “Come now, O God of hope, we are your people …” In accordance with the note in VU 34 about additional verses, “Peace” could be used in place of hope the following week, then joy, then love. Alternatively, if a longer musical response is desired, the worship leader could build from one verse (hope) on Advent 1C, then sing two verses (hope, peace) on Advent 2C, and so on, adding one additional verse each Sunday.

### Prayer of Confession

(Responsive, uses 1 Thessalonians 3:13c, Jeremiah 33:15, Psalm 25:9–10, Luke 21:28b)

One: Merciful God, as the new church year begins, we know we are not ready for your coming.

**Many: We confess that we are selfish, making choices that benefit us while hurting others, forgetting your desire for justice and righteousness to prevail.**

One: We find ourselves trapped in doubt and fear, worrying that there isn’t *really* enough hope for us to depend on, or that you’ve somehow forgotten your promises.

**Many: We are sorry, God, and we ask you to forgive us. Reorient us as citizens of your kin-dom; remind us that we are your beloved children.**

One: We now pause to prayerfully search our hearts, sharing with you the thoughts, words, and actions that we so deeply regret and no longer wish to carry … (*pause for silent confession*).

### Words of Assurance

Siblings in Christ, receive this good news; in Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven, and our hope is restored! The Psalmist boldly addresses God, singing “be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Do not remember the sins of (our) youth or our transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember (us), for the sake of your goodness, O LORD!” (Psalm 25: 6–7). We can be confident of God’s steadfast love and mercy. All is forgiven! Thanks be to God, **Amen.**

### Children’s Hymn

MV33 “Jesus Came Bringing Us Hope”

This is a simple, singable hymn that can easily be repeated if you need additional time for the children to depart for Sunday School. For subsequent weeks of Advent, you could begin with “hope” and then add one additional verse, so Advent 2C = hope and peace, Advent 3C = hope, peace, and joy, Advent 4C = hope, peace, joy, and love. If a shorter version is desired, another option is to use only the lyric of the theme verse, so 2C = peace, 3C = joy, and 4C = love.

## God Speaks Through the Word

### Musical Invitation to the Word

MV97 “Listen, God is Calling”[[2]](#footnote-2)

### Scriptures

Jeremiah 33:14–16

Psalm 25:1–10[[3]](#footnote-3)

1 Thessalonians 3:9–13

Luke 21:25–36

### Sample Sermon Titles

1. “Happy New Year! Ancient-Future Advent Hope”
2. “Hanging In, Hanging On (to Hope)”
3. “Waiting with Hope, Waiting in Prayer”
4. “It’s The End of the World as We Know It (Kingdom Living in Troubled Times)”

## We Respond to God

### Responsive Hymn

VU7 08 “My Lord, What a Morning” (Sermon Topic 1)

MV 213 “Take Up His Song of Hope”\* (Sermon Topic 2)

VU 614 “In Suffering Love (Sermon Topic 3)

MV 161 “I Have Called You by Your Name” (Sermon Topic 4)

\*Wherever you see the word “peace” in this hymn, the composer/lyricist has noted her permission to substitute the word “hope” for verse 1, “faith” for verse 2, and, since this hymn is being used for Advent 1C, you could return to “hope” again for verse 3. If you prefer to use non-gendered language when referring to the Holy One (i.e. “God’s song” instead of “his song”), you will need to secure permission from the composer, Laura Herman.

### Pastoral Prayer/The Lord’s Prayer (Responsive)

The music for Psalm 25, “In You We Hope, We Trust” can be played quietly in the background while the prayer leader says the following:

One: As we pray together, we bring our concerns to the Holy One who makes space for grace—offering hope to us, and to this beautiful, broken world that God so loves, and is working in and through us (and others) to restore.

In the quiet of our hearts, let us now prayerfully name: the needs of the world where we are hoping for change … (pause) the needs of the church where we are hoping for change … (pause) the needs of our community where we are hoping for change … (pause) the needs of our family and friends where we are hoping for change … (pause) and the needs of our own hearts and lives, especially in the places where we scarcely dare to hope for change … (pause)

**(Sung Response) All:**

To you, O Lord, we lift our souls, in you alone we trust;

Let us not be put to shame, in you, we hope, we trust;

Your steadfast love, it covers us!

Help us to know your paths, O Lord,

Lead us in your truth; All your ways are faithfulness,

As you teach your humble ones, that your covenant is love.[[4]](#footnote-4)

One: And now, let us continue to pray together, using the words that Jesus taught us, using whatever version or language is dearest to our hearts …

**All: Our Father/Mother, who is in heaven … Amen.**

### Invitation to the Offering

Siblings in Christ, we have been renewed in hope together, and strengthened by God’s Word. We make space for God’s grace by sharing generously with others, supporting the work of this church, the wider community, and the world that God so loves. The offering will now be received.

Offertory Response

VU 55 “In the Bleak Midwinter (verse 4 only)

### Offering Prayer (Responsive)

One: Gracious God, we offer you these gifts with expectant, hopeful hearts.Multiply these resources to support this congregation and your global Church and build your beloved community among our neighbours and the nations!

**All: We gladly give as a habit of holiness; we give with hope for a more just and generous future.**

One: Faithful God, we offer you ourselves. Soften our hearts and reshape our minds until we are reflexively alert to your priorities for this wonderful, yet wounded world that we love and serve in your name.

**All: Holy Spirit, help us to make space for the grace of hope this week. Amen.**

## God Sends Us

Sending Hymn

VU 662 “Lead Me, God”

### Commissioning and Benediction

Choral Amen

“As We Leave” by Lisa Waites[[5]](#footnote-5)

### Questions for Further Reflection

The Advent season marks the beginning of a new year on the Christian Calendar. What kind of spiritual “New Year’s Resolutions” would you like to make for the 2024–2025 church year? Do you want to pray more regularly? Spend more time reading the Bible? Explore a new-to-you spiritual discipline? Perhaps you’d like to join a different church committee/team, or initiate a new outreach ministry? Learn more about becoming an anti-ableist church?

Which areas of your spiritual life are green and growing, like the trees that Jesus mentioned in Luke 21:29–30? What areas of your spiritual life are not doing so well, and how might you add some fertilizer, water, pruning, or mulch? Pause for a moment of prayer; ask the Holy Spirit to help you make an honest inventory of your faith life and practices, and then ask yourself the following set of questions: “What is growing and vibrant? What spiritual qualities can I celebrate and nurture in my daily life, as this new liturgical year begins?” Please make a written list, a visual representation, or a digital dictation.

Next, ask yourself: “What is dying or dormant in my spiritual life right now? What spiritual qualities require my attention and prayerful support to implement or improve?” Again, write them down, draw a picture, or make a digital dictation. Once completed, pause to pray, asking God to guide you toward the daily routines, resources, and relationships that will assist you and provide accountability for your spiritual growth goals, this year. Consider asking a family member or congregant to act as your spiritual mentor or accountability partner, to pray for each other and to offer regular (monthly?) check-ins, providing informal support for challenges and sharing your spiritual celebrations.

Additional Worship Resources for Advent 1C

Liturgical Poetry: “You Said Meet You by the Fig Tree” (Advent 1C, Luke 21:25-36) in Michael Coffey, *Mystery Without Rhyme or Reason: Poetic Reflections on the Revised Common Lectionary* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015), 119-120.

Liturgical Poetry: “A Blessing for Traveling in the Dark” (Advent 1C, Psalm 25:4) in Jan Richardson, *Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons* (Orlando, FL: Wanton Gospeller Press, 2015), 30-31.

Liturgical Poetry: “Drawing Near” (Advent 1C, Luke 21:280) in Jan Richardson, *Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons* (Orlando, FL: Wanton Gospeller Press, 2015), 32-33.

Liturgical Poetry: “For the Darkness and the Light” (Advent, Hope) by Janet Morley, in Geoffrey Duncan, *Shine On, Star of Bethlehem: A Worship Resource for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany*, 3rd ed (Norwich, UK: Canterbury Press, 2004), 17-18. Permission has been kindly granted by Canterbury Press for this poem to be used during Advent 2024 for non-commercial worship purposes.

1. The sheet music for “As We Light This Candle” is available at united-church.ca/worship-theme/advent-unwrapped. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Please seek the copyright holder’s permission to change the last word of this piece so that it matches each of our four Advent themes. On Advent 1C, for example, you could replace “joy” with “hope.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Instead of reading the Psalm this week, you could use the music score for Psalm 25, composed by Lisa Waites, available on united-church.ca/worship-theme/advent-unwrapped. Ask your church accompanist to play through it during the prelude or postlude for a few weeks before Advent begins to “get the tune in their ears.” Another option would be for your choir or worship leader to sing through the Psalm once, and then have the congregation join in on the repeat, offering a collective musical response. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This musical setting of Psalm 25:1-10 “In You, We Hope, We Trust” is © Lisa Waites, 2024. The piano/vocal/guitar score is available at united-church.ca/worship-theme/advent-unwrapped. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The music for this choral amen has been provided in Piano-Voice-Guitar format, and permission is hereby granted for non-commercial use in UCC settings (live worship and recorded/streamed digital worship) using the “Advent lyrics” during the Sundays of Advent 1C through 4C, and the “Christmas Eve lyrics” on December 24th. Please do report each use of this service music to OneLicense. To continue ethically accessing this music after Christmas Eve 2024, please contact the composer by emailing her at lisa.waites1@gmail.com [↑](#footnote-ref-5)